

THE KRONSTADT REBELLION: THE STRUGGLE FOR SELF-REPRESENTATION
AND THE BOUNDARIES OF BOLSHEVIK DISCOURSE

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When the Kronstadt sailors and soldiers decided to break with the Bolshevik-dominated Soviet regime on 1 March, 1921, they did so with the hope of correcting the Soviet system of government. The Bolsheviks responded to the Kronstadt rebellion with a combination of vigorous propaganda and ruthless suppression. Historical accounts of the rebellion have attempted to paint it as either the “road not taken” for Russian Social Democracy, or proof of the Bolsheviks’ commitment to rule by terror and coercion. Few have examined the cultural contexts within which the Kronstadt rebels carved out an independent and potentially competitive identity to that of the Bolsheviks.

This paper examines the Kronstadt rebellion as an act of self-representation on the part of the “Kronstadters,” wherein they attempted to seize the narrative of the October Revolution as their own. Through newspapers, resolutions, and slogans, the Kronstadt

rebels articulated a vision of the October Revolution that threatened to write the Bolsheviks out of the picture. But, in appropriating October, the Kronstadt rebels also absorbed the Bolshevik revolutionary lexicon. This set the boundaries for how the Kronstadt rebels expressed their identity, and limited their ability to truly break from Bolshevik domination.

Such research contributes to the growing discussions about language, and its influence on memory and history. Further, this approach contributes to our understanding of how repressive regimes garner support from the populace in building and consolidating historical narratives, while simultaneously repressing counter-narratives.

General Audience Abstract

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Histories of the Russian Revolution generally fall into three categories: those that focus on the political events, those that focus on social conditions, and those that study the development of "Soviet culture". One of the fundamental questions asked by all historians of the Revolution is to what degree did Bolshevik propaganda and ideology penetrate Russian popular consciousness.

This paper explores the rebellion that took place in the city and military fortress of Kronstadt in 1921 as a reflection of Bolshevik propaganda, demonstrating that the population received and appropriated Bolshevik modes of communication between 1917 and 1921. Documents published by the Kronstadt rebels show that their identity was heavily influenced by perceptions of the October Revolution that were first elucidated by the Bolsheviks. Thus, the more interesting questions are how did the formation of identity during the early Soviet period intentionally (or unintentionally) support the Bolshevik regime, and how did this support wax and wane over time?

CHAPTER 1 THE KRONSTADT REBELLION

By November 1920, the outcome of the Russian Civil War was no longer in doubt. The Bolsheviks found themselves in control of much of the former domain of the tsar. Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel had been driven back. The Crimea, Siberia, and the Ukraine were tentatively under the red banner, although Russia was in ruins, and Bolshevik control tenuous. Continuous fighting from 1914 through 1920 robbed the country of able-bodied farmers and workers. Cities of Northern Russia were depopulated by as much as 24%.¹ The threat of famine loomed large over much of the country due to disastrous “requisitioning” policies under War Communism. The Civil War caused enormous social fluidity and instability, a major liability to a government determined to empower one social class over another. A blockade of Russia continued to symbolize international opposition to the Bolshevik regime. Fuel shortages meant that industrial and economic production was nearly non-existent. Finally, and most alarming to the Bolsheviks, many of the fiercest supporters of the Bolshevik regime (those workers that joined the party *before* the October Revolution) died fighting the Civil War.

The Bolsheviks were also contending with discontent within the Party. Internal opposition groups were calling for political, social, and bureaucratic reforms. Outspoken opposition increased steadily at the Party Congresses between 1917 and 1921.² The Workers’ Opposition, for example, opposed in the name of the country’s trade unions many of the programs that comprised War Communism. The bureaucratization of the Party was a particularly contentious issue. Many Party members began to feel that

contact with the working class had been severed, with the Party leadership becoming a class apart. Internal bureaucratic power struggles began to diminish the Bolsheviks' credibility among non-partisan revolutionaries within the Red Army.

This loss of credibility was best exemplified at the Kronstadt naval base outside of Petrograd. In June 1920, Fyodor Raskolnikov was appointed chief commander of the Baltic Fleet, charged by Trotsky with rebuilding the demoralized fleet and reinvigorating the Party apparatus in and around Kronstadt. Party membership had dropped by nearly one-half during 1920, owing largely to negative perceptions of the Bolsheviks.³

Raskolnikov was unsuccessful due to abuses of power, and the "special privileges" he and his henchmen enjoyed.⁴ Moreover, the Party boss in Petrograd, Zinoviev, thwarted many of Raskolnikov's plans for centralization, fearing that Trotsky was attempting to undermine Zinoviev's control of Petrograd. By mid-February, Raskolnikov was ejected from the Kronstadt garrison. The Bolsheviks' image was further damaged in the eyes of Kronstadt's inhabitants, and a political and ideological power vacuum ensued.

On 26 February, sailors aboard the naval vessels *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol* held an emergency meeting to discuss rumors of strikes and lockouts in Petrograd. In defiance of the Bolshevik commissar's threats and warnings, the meeting proceeded to elect 32 non-partisan sailors as a "fact-finding" delegation to travel from Kronstadt to Petrograd to ascertain what was happening.⁵ Such insubordination revealed the tenuousness of Bolshevik control over the military fortifications and the city of Kronstadt. Open revolt followed two days later, when the delegates reported back on what they had seen at factories in and around Petrograd. Food shortages forced the

Bolsheviks to cut food rations by 1/3 – leading to unrest in Petrograd. In addition, fuel shortages forced 64 of Petrograd's largest factories to shutdown by mid-February.⁶

For many of the sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt, the events unfolding in Petrograd in late February were the final straw. Many were from the villages of Russia and the Ukraine, and had witnessed Bolshevik "requisitioning" policies. The news from Petrograd was proof for many of Bolshevik incompetence and mismanagement. On 28 February, the Kronstadt Resolutions were drafted at a meeting of the first and second brigades assigned to the *Petropavlovsk* and the *Sevastopol*.⁷ Despite the best efforts of Kronstadt's Bolshevik leaders to prevent their promulgation, these resolutions were passed at a meeting chaired by Stepan Petrichenko. They called for new elections to the Soviets by secret ballot, freedom of the press and political agitation for all anarchist and "left socialist" parties, equalization of food rations between workers and party leaders, and the lifting of the ban on free exchange for agricultural goods.⁸ The resolutions were subsequently approved at the 1 March gathering on Anchor Square.

Bolshevik leaders in Moscow quickly painted the Kronstadt Resolutions as a "Black Hundreds" document--a product of reactionary White forces in Kronstadt working in alliance with exiles in Western Europe. They argued from the start that the mutineers were not the same class-conscious soldiers who had manned the *Aurora* and surrounded the Winter Palace, and that Kronstadt had been drained of its class-conscious element during the Civil War. Thus, the Bolsheviks contended, ignorant peasant conscripts, mostly from the Ukraine, manned Kronstadt in March 1921. As a result, it was easy for White forces in Kronstadt to manipulate the garrison with vague promises of freedom. Trotsky continued to argue this as late as 1938 in his *Hue and Cry Over Kronstadt*.⁹ The

Bolsheviks were alarmed by the events that were unfolding after the Kronstadt Resolutions were drafted. Local Bolshevik Party leaders in Kronstadt called for a general meeting to take place on the evening of 1 March on Anchor Square. Mikhail Kalinin, chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets addressed the meeting. It is estimated that twelve to fifteen thousand people were assembled. Kalinin and Nikolai Kuzmin were never able to gain control of the unruly audience. They were heckled and shouted down by the crowd, which overwhelmingly approved the Kronstadt Resolutions despite Bolshevik protests. On 2 March, elected delegates convened to nominate a presidium, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. At this meeting, the Bolshevik leaders in Kronstadt, including Kuzmin and Pavel Vasiliev, were arrested after threatening that the Bolsheviks would never willingly surrender power. Non-partisan elections for the Kronstadt Soviet were tentatively scheduled for 11 March.

After the election of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, Kronstadt took up a defensive strategy vis-à-vis the Communists. The hope was to hold out until the ice melted around Kronstadt, making a land assault impossible. Then, the Bolsheviks might be forced to come to terms with the Kronstadters' demands.¹⁰ The Bolsheviks were not about to negotiate. Increasing food rations and enforcing martial law through the Petrograd Defense Committee silenced much of Petrograd. But while the city and surrounding district were pacified, tensions were still high, as many of the factories were closed to prevent groups from congregating. On 4 March, Zinoviev called a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet to discuss the crisis. The meeting was reportedly stormy, with heated arguments over the legitimacy of the Kronstadters' demands.¹¹ The Bolsheviks

forced through a resolution that called for the immediate surrender of the city and forts of Kronstadt.

The Bolsheviks also initiated a vigorous propaganda campaign against the mutineers. The 2 March issue of Moscow's *Pravda* featured an official reaction signed by Lenin and Trotsky, insisting that the rebellion was instigated and maintained by an international conspiracy based in Paris. In proof, they cited an article in the French newspaper *Le Matin*, which two weeks before the rebellion claimed unrest broke out in Kronstadt. They concluded that the French government sponsored the rebellion, but made a mistake in timing the release of information.¹² Further, they argued that Alexander Kozlovsky, a former Tsarist general that the Bolsheviks placed in charge of artillery at Kronstadt shortly before the uprising, led the rebellion on behalf of White Guard émigrés. The article dismissed the Kronstadt Resolutions and the rebellion as an attempt to discredit the Soviet regime by anarchists, Social Revolutionaries and White Guardists.¹³

By 3 March, the city of Kronstadt and its surrounding forts were in the hands of the insurgents. The PRC began printing the *Izvestiia Vremennovo Revoliutsionnovo Komiteta Matrosov, Krasnoarmeitsev i Rabochikh Goroda Kronshtadta* (*News of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Sailors, Soldiers and Workers of the City of Kronstadt*), better known as the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*. The paper was the official source of communication between the PRC and the inhabitants of Kronstadt during the rebellion. The first issue began with an appeal for calm within the city. The authors argued that the events that were unfolding represented "the voice of the people in its entirety, of all workers." Only through the common effort of all workers would it be possible to lead the

Republic out of its “dead end,” and to give bread, wood, and coal to everyone.¹⁴ Trotsky arrived from Moscow on 5 March, after consulting with Lenin.¹⁵ With his arrival, the moments of indecision and hopes of a peaceful solution to the standoff the Kronstadters’ enjoyed had come to an end. To prevent the dissemination of propaganda, the Bolsheviks had Kronstadt sealed off from the mainland by capturing the fort at Oranienbaum. Relatives of the Kronstadt mutineers were taken hostage in Petrograd.¹⁶ On 5 March, Trotsky issued an ultimatum to the Kronstadt insurgents, which was subsequently printed in the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*. In his ultimatum, Trotsky ordered that Kronstadt be restored to the jurisdiction of the Soviet government, and all insurgents lay down their arms. It ended ominously with “This is the last warning.”¹⁷

The first attack on Kronstadt began with artillery fire on 7 March. The Bolsheviks relied heavily upon partisan military cadets for their direct assault on 8 March. The battle was disastrous for the Communists, as they had to run across miles of ice facing cannon fire from the city of Kronstadt, and machine gun crossfire from the nearby forts. Additional attempts to take the city failed on 10 and 12 March. But time and resources were on the side of the Communist forces. The blockade of Kronstadt assured that no supporters could reach the garrison. Food and medical supplies were scarce, despite what was printed in the *Izvestiia*. And with each passing day, the fortresses were using up more of their ammunition against Bolshevik attacks. Nevertheless, the Kronstadters still resisted friendly overtures from dissident groups outside of Russia that sent communiqués via radio.¹⁸

In the early morning hours of 17 March, some fifty thousand soldiers were involved in the final assault. Sneaking across the snow and ice camouflaged in white, the

Bolshevik forces were able to engage Kronstadt's defenders at close range.¹⁹ Fierce street battles continued into the morning hours of 18 March. By the end of the day, however, the city and the *Petropavlovsk* were under Bolshevik control, with the leaders of the uprising fleeing to Finland. It has been estimated the Red Army forces might have suffered as many as 10,000 casualties.²⁰ The Kronstadters' fates are less well known, with an estimated that about 600 Kronstadters being killed in the fighting. In addition, approximately 1,000 were injured and 2,500 taken prisoner. Many of these prisoners were summarily executed before the fighting ended. Of those officially taken prisoner, 12 were tried and executed. The rest were either sentenced to life in Russian labor camps, or "rehabilitated" (sent to the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, or the Siberian flotilla).²¹

Notes

¹ Daniel Brower, "the City in Danger: The Civil War and the Russian Urban Population", Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War, ed. Diane Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 61-62.

² William Henry Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 368-369.

³ Israel Getzler, Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211.

⁴ Getzler, 210.

⁵ Getzler, 212.

⁶ Chamberlin, 432.

⁷ These resolutions were also known as the *Petropavlovsk* Resolutions - named after the ship where the sailors and soldiers met to draft them.

⁸ Pravda o Kronshtadte (Prague: *Volia Rossii*, 1921), 9-10.

⁹ Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Kronstadt, ed. Barbara Mutnick (New York: Monad Press, 1979), 83-94.

¹⁰ Paul Avrich, Kronstadt 1921 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970), 140.

¹¹ Emma Goldman, Living My Life (New York: Dover Communications Inc., 1970), 879-881. And Alexander Berkman, *Russia Diary*, 4 March, 1921.

¹² Lenin, Trotsky, Kronstadt, 65. Paul Avrich indicates that there is some credibility to the Bolshevik charge that Russian émigrés in Western Europe were conspiring in January of 1921 to incite rebellion at Kronstadt. But he concludes that the actual uprising was spontaneous, with no contact between the mutineers and the émigré community. See Avrich, 88-130

¹³ Lenin's private reaction to the rebellion indicates the degree to which the Bolsheviks attempted to discredit the Kronstadters. He was heard to say that the Kronstadters only wanted to correct the Bolsheviks 'on the matter of free trade'. Lenin thus recognized that the Kronstadters aims were a modified form of Soviet power. But he could never concede this publicly for fear of losing the tenuous control the Bolsheviks had over Soviet Russia. See Getzler, 220.

¹⁴ Pravda o Kronshtadte, 44-45.

¹⁵ Avrich, 144.

¹⁶ Getzler, 221. The taking of hostages was a favored tactic by the Bolsheviks in the Civil War as well.

¹⁷ Getzler, 67.

¹⁸ Getzler, 235.

¹⁹ Richard Pipes, A Concise History of the Russian Revolution (New York: Random House, Inc., 1996), 349.

²⁰ Avrich, 211.

²¹ Getzler 243-245.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF KRONSTADT AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

While popular unrest was not uncommon in Russia between 1917 and 1921, the Kronstadt rebellion has received disproportionate attention in historical analysis of the period. Nester Makhno led a popular revolt against the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine. In Tambov province, a Social Revolutionary peasant, Alexander Antonov, led a band of peasants in a guerrilla war that was not completely crushed by Communist forces until 1924.¹ Yet Kronstadt is represented as the most serious of these insurrections, and a topic of continued debate well into the Cold War era. Some have argued that this is because the uprising was located at a military base near Petrograd, the birthplace of the Revolution. But this does not fully explain Kronstadt's historical importance, as the population of Petrograd was pacified early in the uprising by concessions from the Petrograd Soviet, and the Kronstadters dismissed offensive action; both of which rendered the rebellion ineffective at even the provincial level.

Yet, the Kronstadt rebellion stands as a pivotal moment in the historiography of the Russian Revolution. Western historians often note that it took place during the historic 10th Party Congress, where Lenin banned factionalism within the Party. For them, Kronstadt was an embodiment of the social discontent that forced the Bolsheviks to abandon War Communism and institute the New Economic Policy (NEP). Simultaneously, the Kronstadt rebellion demonstrated Bolshevik intentions to consolidate political space by eliminating ideological alternatives to Bolshevism. Thus, while

opening up the economic sector with the introduction of the NEP, the Bolsheviks were also closing the political arena to non-party (*bezpartiinyi*) participation. The suppression of Kronstadt symbolized the Bolshevik Party's commitment to dictatorship in the name of a totalitarian state.² The 10th Party Congress virtually banned any activity (social or political) that went against this doctrine, branding opposition inside and outside the Party as "counter-revolutionary."

Narratives of the Russian Revolution written in the West have focused on Kronstadt for differing reasons since the rebellion. During the 1920s and 1930s, these works were often the products of Russian exiles or Western observers. As such, they tended to focus on the major political events of the Revolution, giving us the formulaic narrative: popular discontent and World War I led to the February Revolution, which, in turn produced a political vacuum and continued unrest – making the October coup possible for the Bolsheviks; who had to fight the Civil War to solidify power and institute War Communism, the violence of which produced the Kronstadt rebellion and forced a Bolshevik retreat into the NEP until the regime of force and oppression could reemerge as Stalinism³

Cold War historians in the West simplified this narrative, sharpening criticisms of the Bolsheviks in particular and Communism in general, while writing popular participation out of the Russian Revolution after February 1917. Their accounts were produced by backtracking from Stalin to restructure the revolutionary narrative so that Stalinism appeared to be the only possible outcome of the revolution. These histories invariably concluded that Stalinism was the direct descendant of the policies of Lenin, and/or that Soviet Socialism was only maintainable through a combination of Russian

“Oriental” government structure and terror.⁴ When these historians ponder who the Kronstadters were, and what they fought for, their intent is to discredit October 1917 as an illegitimate “coup” carried out by the Bolsheviks. Within this framework, popular expression or actions in the name of October were the product of coercion or manipulation. Such historians argue that the only chance Russia had to go the “right way” was immediately after February 1917, but that opportunity was hijacked by a small band of extremists.

Western historians tended to see the Kronstadt rebellion as an early indication of the Bolsheviks’ inability to connect with the population – the point after which the Bolsheviks had to abandon ideology, and temporarily retreat into the NEP before resuming their regime of force and coercion.⁵ Political histories have exercised considerable influence over historiography of the Revolution in the West up to the present day. As weapons in the Cold War, these narratives were aimed at questioning the legitimacy of the October Revolution, and, by extension, Communism in general.

During the 1960s, some historians made revisions to the political narrative, shifting emphasis away from political and military events and towards the experiences of everyday Russians. The question of legitimacy was thus taken up from the other perspective – how did common people support (or not support) the October Revolution? The revisionists (as they came to be known) wanted to rewrite the history of the Russian Revolution from the perspective of the population. For them, October 1917 was a workers’ revolution, not a coup. The Kronstadt rebellion was an example of the true revolutionary tradition spawned by October. The NEP was a period of social, political,

and economic experimentation that could have produced a functional Social-Democratic society in Russia. Stalinism was the anomaly that thwarted this development.

Social historians brought a new perspective to the debate, looking at identity and class as important guides to understanding support for the Bolshevik regime. The social or political composition of the Kronstadters took on new importance, as Kronstadt came to be seen as the viable path of Social Democracy that the Bolsheviks denied. Social historians argued that while three-fourths of the Kronstadters were of peasant origin, this make-up was not different from the revolutionary days of 1905 or February 1917.⁶

Others looked at enlistment statistics, contemporary accounts, and birth-dates for those that served on the *Petropavlovsk* and the *Sevastopol*. Further discrediting the Bolshevik assertions, such analysis of the two battalions that authored the Resolutions reveals that almost 94% of them were recruited into the navy *before* 1917.⁷

But as one commentator points out, social historians found themselves involved in “tortured arguments for the legitimacy of a dictatorship.”⁸ Social historical perspectives have fallen from favor since 1991, but the social historical sources and methods they employed are still being used in new and innovative ways. The concepts of class, nationality, and identity, which formed the backbone of many social historical accounts of the Revolution, are now examined outside of the Soviet context. Historians like Sheila Fitzpatrick are beginning to see how individuals in Russian society appropriated overlapping and conflicting identities.⁹

Both political and social historiography of Kronstadt has focused on the rebellion as a raw political and military battle, but the battle over Kronstadt was also a battle over its meaning.

Notes

¹ Martin Malia, The Soviet Tragedy (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 143.

² “Totalitarian” in this sense is not the equivalent of dictatorial rule. The idea that one could rationally control all facets of economic development (in totality) for the benefit of society was a product of 18th century Rationalism, 19th century Socialist thought, and 20th century Modernism. The negative aspects of the totalitarian model (and its equation with dictatorial rule) were elucidated during the 1930s to describe the Italian fascist model. This description was then appropriated for Nazism and only later applied to Soviet Socialism.

³ While not all histories continued into the Stalinist era, works like Chamberlin’s *The Russian Revolution* certainly pave the way for the rise of Stalinism within the framework of their narrative.

⁴ Malia, 134.

⁵ Malia, 142-143.

⁶ Avrich, 89.

⁷ Israel Getzler looked at the writings of Ieronymus Yasinsky. In 1920, Yasinsky was sent to Kronstadt by the Bolshevik leadership to evaluate the “political literacy” of the Kronstadt sailors. He concluded that, while many of the Kronstadt sailors were confused by certain political concepts, the “Red Sailor” (those infused with the spirit of the October Revolution) still predominated. See Getzler, 206-208.

⁸ Stephen Kotkin, “1991 and the Russian Revolution: Sources, Conceptual Categories, Analytical Frameworks,” The Journal of Modern History 70, no. 2 (1998): 397.

⁹ Shiela Fitzpatrick, “New Perspectives on the Civil War,” Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War, ed. Diane Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3-23.

CHAPTER 3

KRONSTADT AND THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION – THE BATTLE FOR SELF REPRESENTATION

While the cultural politics of early Soviet society were long ignored, they have come under more recent scholarly scrutiny.¹ Some historians argue that within such a cultural frame of reference, one can better understand how the Bolsheviks retained power despite their brutal practices and policies. Through the redecoration of public spaces, and the creation of new monuments, autonomous groups such as the *Proletkult* (The Proletarian Culture Movement), and non-Bolshevik groups of artists, educators, and volunteers contributed to the growth of symbols that gave substance, history, and legitimacy to the October Revolution without Bolshevik ideology.² While there was not yet a unified narrative for the October Revolution, these groups helped to cement a common set of assumptions that would inspire the Kronstadters in 1921. But while these historians provide us with insights into nonparty interactions with the idea of October, they do not evaluate how deeply the efforts of the Bolsheviks or these nonaffiliated groups penetrated into popular consciousness.

In an historiographical review of the Russian Revolution, Stephen Kotkin looked at these and other trends in the field of Russian history as they stood in 1997.³ He found that new methodologies have begun to reconcile social and cultural sources into accounts that overcome the obstacles that divided studies of Russia during the Cold War. For October 1917, Kotkin asserts,

Each side [cold war and revisionist historians] had a point. October was a coup d'état, and it took place against the background of multiple popular uprisings.... What each side largely missed, however, was that the coup was transformed only after the fact into a qualitatively new revolution that was simultaneously participatory and coercive... [T]he "October Revolution" took place after October, not during the war-induced radicalization of the summer and fall of 1917.⁴

Thus, the key to understanding how the Bolsheviks took and maintained power lies in examining popular support for the October Revolution as it was being written throughout the early Soviet period. The fact that the actual events of October 1917 amounted to a coup bears little relevance if it was popularly *remembered* as a revolution.

Thus, Kronstadt was foremost a political threat to the Bolsheviks. The armed forces were the largest political institution at the time, and the means of maintaining power in Russia. That is not to say that the Kronstadt sailors were in a position to overthrow the Bolshevik government or incite the Red Army to mutiny. Rather, the rebellion offered an alternative vision of the Soviets without Bolshevik Party domination. Further, the Kronstadters' demands were voiced in such a way as to potentially attract social support by embracing the October Revolution. It was this alternative vision that the Bolsheviks sought to repress. The Bolshevik siege of Kronstadt was a fight to rule in the name of the October Revolution, and thereby continue to refine and define it.

Within such cultural contexts, this paper looks at the Kronstadt rebellion, and the identity the Kronstadt sailors appropriated in relation to the October Revolution.⁵ In particular, it examines the critical role political discourse and perceptions of October played in the formation of the Kronstadters' identity during the rebellion. Discourse that surrounded the rebellion was permeated with assumptions about the legitimacy of the October Revolution, and these assumptions figured prominently in the Kronstadters'

attempts to define themselves within the contexts of early Soviet Russia. Through resolutions, articles and slogans, the Kronstadters were carving out a vision of October that threatened to write the Revolution without the Bolsheviks. But this vision was constrained by the lexicon the Bolsheviks used between 1917 and 1921 in defense of the October Revolution. Thus, this analysis focuses on the political and discursive connections between the Kronstadt rebellion of 1921 and the October Revolution, as it came to be understood during the Russian Civil War.

I derive this argument from a variety of historical writings that examine discourse and its power to shape political reality. Lynn Hunt has argued that discourse became the key instrument of political and social change in Revolutionary France.⁶ By breaking with the traditions and laws of the past, the French Revolutionaries created a “mythic present,” wherein discourse continually reshaped the political, cultural, and social landscape of Revolutionary France in the hopes of creating a transparent connection between the population and the state. The struggle to speak on behalf of the population led to new relational understandings of France’s present *and* its past, as the present and past were constantly renegotiated. Russia experienced its own mythic present during the early Soviet era, where discourse had tremendous influence on shaping political reality. Second, Frederick Corney, in his work on the October Revolution has argued that discourse not only has the power to shape social conditions, it also can be used to write a Revolution period after October 1917.⁷ Corney asserts that the October Revolution as we understand it today was “written” during the 1920s, as reminiscences, film, and stories were collected and edited by the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks were deliberately rewriting the Revolution in their own image during the mid-1920s. As they did, he argues, the

process of collecting testimonials and other historical information drew much of the population into its making. Finally, James von Geldern demonstrates the degree of popular support for commemoration of the October Revolution and establishment of commemorative festivals.⁸ Festivals were cultural media, molded by Futurist artists who worked often outside of official circles. These perspectives cast a new light on the role of the October Revolution as a legitimating force that the Communist Party relied on during the 1920s and 1930s. Rather than simply dismissing October as a coup that led the Bolsheviks to power, a more nuanced study of the support October enjoyed would shed light on how the Bolsheviks were able to survive economic hardship and Civil War without being forced from power.

Using such a theoretical base, I argue that after October 1917, and well into the 1920s, there was a Russian mythic present, wherein the ability to speak publicly on political matters *was* power. But in contradistinction to the French mythic present, Russia's moment was not a struggle to speak on behalf of the general will.⁹ Rather, it was a struggle to speak on behalf of October, the founding event of the Soviet state. The Kronstadters posed a serious threat to the Bolsheviks by identifying their cause in relation to October, thereby threatening Bolshevik control of the soviets. As there was no authoritative source on October, the Bolsheviks had to assure overwhelming representation in the soviets, which were used, in turn, to speak on behalf of the October Revolution. Discourse was law, and October became the sole legitimating source of the government. The importance of political discourse during this period cannot be overlooked. By the end of the Civil War, almost all strata of Russian society appropriated at least some of the revolutionary lexicon disseminated by the Bolsheviks.

Buried within this lexicon were awkward templates for identity that the Russian population adopted without coercion. Peasants that moved into the cities during the Civil War began to call themselves “proletarians.” Many peasants turned on their “kulak” neighbors. Ukrainian peasants newly stationed at Kronstadt during the 1921 uprising became Kronstadters, defenders of the October Revolution.

The Kronstadt rebellion was an event that helped reify the October Revolution. By their actions, and in their own words, the Kronstadters fought to maintain the integrity and legitimacy of October, as they understood it.¹⁰ To establish this, I first examine the political discourse produced by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War, identifying common characteristics in form and content that persevered throughout the period. I then look at the Kronstadters’ political perspectives, and their struggle for self-identity. Their discourse came in a myriad of forms written and spoken. In particular, I have focused my examination on the Kronstadt Resolutions and the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*. This examination exposes not only the identity the Kronstadters fashioned, but also the confines of Bolshevik discourse and a latent perception of the October Revolution. Articles from the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* offered the intellectual space within which many Kronstadters were defining October. But these definitions were shaped using words, phrases, and discursive forms derived from Bolshevik propaganda during the Civil War. At the heart of the Kronstadt rebellion was the October Revolution, its legacy, and who could claim to be its “true” disciples.

Notes

¹ Cultural approaches to Soviet history in the West began with Rene Fulop-Miller in the 1920s. Examining the development of Bolshevik political culture fell from favor until after the 1960s. Richard Stites revived this perspective of Russian history during the late 70s and early 80s. See Rene Fulop-Miller, The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: an Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1928) and Bolshevik Culture : Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution, ed. Richard Stites et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

² James von Geldern, Bolshevik Festivals: 1917-1920 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³ Kotkin, 397.

⁴ Kotkin, 398.

⁵ The terms “rebellion” and “uprising” will appear throughout this paper in regards to Kronstadt without distinctions to the subtle differences between the terms (with the former implying military opposition, while the latter has a social implication). While examining how and by whom the terms were used (in Russian and in English) would be a fascinating study, it is not necessary to elucidate these differences for my argument.

⁶ Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 24.

⁷ Frederick Corney, Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

⁸ James von Geldern, Bolshevik Festivals: 1917-1920 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau’s general will, the theory of one voice for the will of the masses, was largely influential during the French and the Russian Revolutions.

¹⁰ The concept of legitimacy, as it relates to studies of the Russian Revolution, requires re-examination. Born of a Cold War mentality, this approach to Soviet Russia attempts to place judgement on the events rather than examining how the participants may have initiated, participated in, or reacted to October 1917.

CHAPTER 4

BOLSHEVIK DISCOURSE AND THE RUSSIAN MYTHIC PRESENT

During the Russian Civil War, the mentality of the Bolsheviks towards political opposition was codified in newspapers, speeches, and other forms of political discourse. This mentality had a profound impact on not only the Bolsheviks, but also the population in general. When the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, they envisioned implementing a new form of government: the dictatorship of the proletariat. As such, they sought a break with the past, consigning all that came before it to the “trash bin of history” (to misquote Trotsky). But the Bolsheviks had no experience with administration, and no guidebook to build a socialist state. To make matters worse, most administrative personnel in the former Provisional Government refused to work for the Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, decisions had to be made: the economy was in ruins, the cities were threatened by starvation, and Russia was still at war with Germany. Without the context of precedent or written laws, this decision-making was often done relying on idealistic goals derived from heated Party discussions and ad hoc decisions.

Such political discourse was highly polemical, often reducing problems to polarized absolutes. The first attempt at coordinated economic policy, War Communism, was born of a desire to feed the urban population and maintain factory production. The Bolsheviks hoped to accomplish this while simultaneously abolishing hard currency, encouraging collectivization of agriculture, and prohibiting free trade, with disastrous results. To bolster support in the countryside, the Bolsheviks encouraged poorer peasants

to turn against their *kulak* (wealthy peasant) neighbors by “robbing the robbers.” Of course, the term *kulak* was never fully defined, leaving many administrative regions in chaos as peasants turned on one another, articulating former grudges in terms of class struggle.

During the Civil War, one of the crutches the Bolsheviks relied upon to maintain power was fear of counter-revolution in the countryside. The events of October 1917 unleashed the black repartition, the forcible redistribution of land by the peasants. Victory by the White forces could only bring the reestablishment of former landowners. Thus, the Bolsheviks had a trump card: they argued that any deviation from Bolshevik policy could lead to a counter-revolution. The fear of counter-revolution had a profound effect, even on those who only *conditionally* supported the Bolshevik regime. During the Kronstadt rebellion, the anarchist Alexander Berkman sympathized with the plight of the Kronstadters, but nevertheless noted on 3 March, “I am thinking of offering my services to the Bolsheviks in case of an armed uprising against them.”¹ He reasoned that no other party in Russia was capable of guiding the country or defending the revolution.

Playing on such fears, the Bolsheviks exploited the SR participation in White Guard governments in Siberia and the Crimea as proof that any deviation from Bolshevik control of the Soviets would lead to restoration under the White forces. *Bednota* (*The Poor*), *Petrogradskaia Pravda* (*Petrograd Truth*), and *Krasnaia Gazeta* (*Red Gazette*) made this case repeatedly during the Civil War.² Fear of deviation became a central tenet of Bolshevik political ideology. In February 1918, Lenin warned in *Pravda* of the contagious affects of co-mingling with other parties. His concern was the potential for deviation and degradation. He wrote,

Revolutionary phrase-making, more often than not, is a disease from which revolutionary parties suffer at times when they constitute, directly or indirectly, a combination, alliance or intermingling of proletarian and petty-bourgeois elements, and when the course of revolutionary events is marked by big, rapid zigzags.... The slogans are superb, alluring, intoxicating, but there are no grounds for them; such is the nature of the revolutionary phrase.³

During the Tenth Party Congress, fear of left or right deviation led to Lenin's ban on factionalism within the party. This near paranoia, as it was expressed in Bolshevik newspapers and in other forms of public discourse (including posters and speeches), had a profound effect upon the political consciousness of not only the Bolsheviks, but also much of the population.

But the Bolshevik regime did not rely solely on coercion to communicate with the population. Through periodicals, the Bolsheviks gave the population a new political language to understand the realities they faced. New words and phrases made their appearance in villages and towns across Russia. Hatred of the "bourgeoisie" and the *kulak* was fostered before these terms were fully understood. This new political language penetrated urban and rural Russia through a number of social avenues, most commonly from decommissioned Red Army soldiers and local newspapers of the Soviet government. The rise of such newspapers corresponds with a period in which literacy rates doubled in Russia, jumping from 28.4% to 44.1% between 1897 and 1920.⁴ Thus, Russians were learning to read during a time when a particular revolutionary political discourse dominated the intellectual landscape. Analysis of newspapers from the time of the Civil War reveals a methodology of denunciation that was re-used against the Kronstadters in 1921.

At first glance, one is struck by the peculiar use of headlines in Bolshevik periodicals during the period. Rather than a summary of the stories on a page, banners and headlines were often used to convey a political message that could stand outside the context of the articles in the paper. These banners also served as a political framework with which the reader could gain the proper context for reading the articles. While it is not unusual for banners and headlines to have a persuasive quality, the Bolsheviks began to use them to simplify and consciously convey political ideology on a massive scale. The target of these political lessons was the non-party workers and peasants. This method was most often used over articles commemorating the Revolution, or above political tirades against the “enemies of Soviet power.”

On 6 April, 1919, the banner of *Petrogradskaia pravda* read,

The White Guard and the Left SRs Are Murdering the Vanguard of the
Working Class – Workers of Petrograd, Stand in Defense of Your
Champions! The Mensheviks and Right SRs Are Aiding the Kolchaks
with Their Agitation Against Soviet Power.
It is Necessary to Be Pitiless in Fighting Against the Agents of
Imperialism.
To the Streets!⁵

Along with commentaries about the defense of St. Petersburg, the press defined these enemies of Soviet power to include White Guard forces, Left and Right SRs, Mensheviks, White Guardists, the Polish, the Black Hundreds and “international interventionists” as the enemies.⁶ Such articles left no doubt about the need for the surest kind of political summation: “All know the enemies in the battle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. There can be no middle position – you are either with the proletariat or with the bourgeoisie – there is no third option.”

This format recurs frequently during 1919 in *Petrogradskaia pravda*. In July, the population of Petrograd was reminded, “Laborers, Workers, and Red Army Soldiers of Petrograd! Remember that in the Soviet Re-Elections, the Question Stands Only Thus: For or Against Kolchak. Those against Kolchak Are for Soviet Power!” In addition to this format, some articles became semi-permanent pieces in the paper. Reminders such as “Against the Counter-Revolution” and “Who Is to Blame” became frequent headers for articles in *Bednota*, *Pravda*, and *Krasnaia gazeta*. In June 1918, readers of *Krasnaia gazeta* were reminded that “Soviet Power Gave the Peasants the Land” on the second page of the paper. On the third page, the reader is confronted with a decision: “Either Worker Power or Capitalist Power – There is No Third Option. All Power to the Workers’ Soviets.”⁷

These methods were intended to implicate the reader in the struggle against counter-revolutionary forces through an us-them dichotomy, a mindset that the Bolshevik leadership accepted without reservation. This mindset guided the reader through articles that marginalized enemies as wholly distinct and antithetical entities that stood against Soviet power. Whether they actually opposed the Soviet form of government was irrelevant, as is demonstrated by the lumping of Mensheviks and Left SRs in with the White Guard, the Black Hundreds, and other reactionary forces. Implicating the reader in the struggle against counter-revolution makes the October Revolution a *fait accompli* – an event that cannot be doubted, as it is the foundation upon which all of these arguments rest. Thus, the reader was confronted with a discursive avalanche, a series of political arguments that had to be accepted or rejected *in toto*.

Notes

¹ Alexander Berkman, *Russia Diary*, 3 March, 1921.

² The 6 April, 1919 issue of *Petrogradskaia Pravda* bore the headline “White Guardists and Left SRs Are Killing the Leaders of the Working Class - Workers of Petrograd Are Rising to the Defense - Your Best Fighters! Mensheviks and Right SRs are helping Kolchak and His Agents Against Soviet Power...” In the same issue, the article “Death to Counter-Revolutionaries” singles out the enemies by noting, “All know the enemies in the battle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. There can be no middle position - one is either with the proletariat or with the bourgeoisie - there is no third option.” Similar articles appear in *Bednota* and *Krasnaia Gazeta*.

³ V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 27, trans. Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Central Committee of the C.P.S.U (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960), 19. It is ironic that Lenin missed (or chose to ignore) the importance of the revolutionary phrases his party relied upon to secure support in October 1917, and throughout the Civil War.

⁴ Boris Mironov, “The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries,” History of Education Quarterly 31, no. 2 (Summer 1991), 243.

⁵ Petrogradskaia Pravda, 6 April, 1919.

⁶ “Death to Counter Revolutionaries,” Petrogradskaia Pravda, 6 April, 1919.

⁷ Krasnaia Gazeta, 21 June, 1918.

CHAPTER 5

BOLSHEVIK REPRESENTATIONS OF KRONSTADT

Throughout the Kronstadt rebellion, the Bolsheviks relied on similar print media techniques to drown out the opposition in Kronstadt. The banner in the 6 March issue of *Krasnaia gazeta* urged the population of Kronstadt to renounce the traitors in their midst (White Guard, SRs, and anarchists and in later editions Mensheviks, supporters of Nestor Makhno, and international interventionists) before it was too late.¹ But this was directed not at the Kronstadt population, but at the population of Petrograd. When read in context with the articles that appeared under these banners, namely “The Year of the SR Expulsion” from Soviet power and “The Front Against White Kronstadt,” the banner implied a connection between the Kronstadters and the SR/White Guard alliance, thereby separating the former from the legacy of October.

The 12 March issue of *Petrogradskaia pravda* began with a commemoration of the February Revolution with banner headlines on each page. The first read, “Four Years Ago, Workers and Peasants Overthrew Tsarist Power, which Guarded the Enrichment of the Capitalists.” This was followed on subsequent pages by, “Without the February Revolution, the October Overthrow Would Have Been Impossible” and “Red February was the Forerunner of Red October.” While these headlines seemed to be deflecting attention away from the events in Kronstadt, they were, in fact, providing the context for the articles contained within the paper. First, they set the tone for larger articles such as “About the Kronstadt Escapade,” and smaller ones like “Answering the Provocateurs”

and “On the Kronstadt Front.” Again, these banners served to alienate the Kronstadters from the experiences of the February Revolution (and, by extension, the October Revolution), and thus de-legitimize them. They also provided the necessary context for the Report from the Tenth Party Congress, addressing “Democratization of the Party” (actually the ban on party factions), the “Threat of the Petty-Bourgeoisie,” and the “Fight Against Bureaucratization.”²

Examples of similar use of banners and headlines by the Bolsheviks were abundant during the two weeks of the Kronstadt rebellion, intended to guide the reader to the correct conclusions regarding the materials presented. It is not surprising to find that the Bolsheviks repeated their Civil War tactics in dealing with the Kronstadters. These tactics successfully separated much of the population from the White forces by threatening restoration of land to former landowners should the Reds fail. The Bolsheviks were compelled to drive a wedge between the population and the Kronstadters. Their methods during the Kronstadt rebellion were little more than a continuation of the discursive alienation that encouraged much of the population to think in terms of “us versus them.” Reaction against the Bolsheviks became synonymous with either counter-revolution or a petty-bourgeois mentality.

Before the final assault on Kronstadt, the Bolsheviks encouraged their forces with slogans in their struggle against the Kronstadt rebels. Perhaps more than any other, the slogan “There can be no soviet power without the Communist Party” summed up the Bolshevik position coming out of the Tenth Party Congress.³ Lenin forced through his ban on party factions, most of the provinces of Russia had been brought under Bolshevik control, and the Bolsheviks were beginning to consolidate the revolutionary narrative.

The soviets were becoming the vassals of the Bolshevik Party, and only the Kronstadters stood a chance of challenging the Bolsheviks as champions of October.⁴ Lenin recognized this challenge when he wrote that the Kronstadters,

...wanted to correct the Bolsheviks in regard to restrictions in trade, and this looks like a small shift, which leaves the same slogans of "Soviet power" with ever so slight a change or correction.... We must, I repeat, have a keen sense of this political danger.⁵

While many historians have commented on the scale of Bolshevik propaganda, few have evaluated the effectiveness of these efforts. The Kronstadt rebellion provides us a brief glimpse into the political mentality of a significant segment of Russian society, as it developed between 1917 and 1921. Newly conscripted Russian and Ukrainian peasants, as well as veteran soldiers, sailors, and workers lived and worked in Kronstadt. The rebellion provided a rallying point for all of them, a nexus where personal hostilities towards the Bolsheviks could unite in opposition. But the Bolsheviks' virtual monopoly over public discourse throughout most of European Russia had a tremendous impact on how that hostility was vented. The Bolsheviks guided the rural population through their burgeoning awakening to national and political consciousness, and we find discursive evidence of how effective this guidance was in analysis of the Kronstadt Resolutions and the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*.

Notes

¹ Krasnaia Gazeta, 6 March, 1921.

² Petrogradskaia Pravda, 12 March, 1921.

³ Cited in Getzler, 244.

⁴ Slogans continued to play an important role in the development of the Soviet state. From 1918 through 1954, the Central Committee of the Communist Party published an annual list of slogans for the year in *Pravda*. But coming into the Stalinist period, the affect these slogans had began to diminish, as bureaucracy and law replaced the mythic present. See David N. Jacobs, "Slogans and Soviet Politics," American Slavic and East European Review 16, no. 3 (October 1957), 291.

⁵ Collected Works of Lenin, vol. 32, 185.

CHAPTER 6 REVOLUTIONARY KRONSTADTERS – CLAIMANTS TO A TRUE OCTOBER

The rise of political literacy in Russia was facilitated by the development and expansion of an official language that the Bolsheviks used to describe not only their enemies, but also the difficulties they faced in consolidating power.¹ In the economy of revolution, reliance on vague class categories, slogans and absolute political statements became the currency by which the population exchanged political opinions. The importance of such revolutionary discourse was not lost on the Kronstadters. From the beginning, they sought to revive the slogans that made Kronstadt a center of revolutionary activity in 1905 and 1917. Thus, at issue for the Kronstadters was the ability to define themselves in relation to the revolution. Most popular among their slogans was “All power to the Soviets, not to parties,” a sentiment that was prominent shortly before and after October 1917. Shouts of “Victory or death” at the first and second Conference of Delegates reaffirmed the Kronstadters’ commitment to the rebellion, even before its political ideology was completely worked out.

Identity, therefore, was the focus of all political discourse produced by the Kronstadters. Identifying with the October Revolution contextualized the Kronstadters’ struggles against the Bolsheviks, legitimating their efforts in terms of a defense of October. We find slogans and statements throughout the Kronstadt Resolutions and the *Kronstadt Izvestiia* linking the rebellion to October. But the Kronstadters also recognized the negative sway slogans could have over the population, as they argued that the

Bolsheviks stirred the passions of the population through use of “deceitful slogans,” dragging the population behind them with promises of a better society.²

Bolshevik domination of political discourse in Kronstadt between 1917 and 1921 had a profound effect on this revolutionary identity. The Kronstadt rebels appropriated much of this discourse, using it to articulate their identity as revolutionary representatives of the non-partisan peasants, workers, and soldiers who had made the October Revolution possible. The concept of a union of the peasants and workers was hardly new. Nineteenth century populists often sought such a united front. But it was the Bolsheviks who refined the concept as a propaganda tool during the Civil War: Lenin’s revolutionary *smychka* (merger).³ Analysis of the *Izvestiia* and the Kronstadt Resolutions reveals that while the Kronstadters were hostile to the Bolsheviks and their policies, they had appropriated not only the political lexicon of the Bolsheviks, but also the legacy of defenders of the October Revolution.

The Kronstadt Resolutions were the first iteration of the Kronstadters’ grievances against the Bolsheviks. But they were far more than an anti-Bolshevik declaration. Identity became a key component of Bolshevik and Kronstadt discourse in light of the “heroic” role the Kronstadt sailors had played in the “storming” of the Winter Palace in 1917. Through the Kronstadt Resolutions, the sailors articulated their own identity, using the political lexicon that was shaped during and after October 1917 by the Bolsheviks.⁴ Thus, while arguing against the Bolshevik regime, the Kronstadters were voicing their objections using discursive styles refined by the Bolsheviks, on behalf of the revolution that brought the Bolsheviks to power.

The resolutions began with an assertion of the necessity for new elections to the soviets, as they no longer expressed the will of the laboring masses. While this declaration represented a break with the Bolsheviks, and their domination of the soviets, it was by no means a rejection of October or of revolution. Indeed, the Kronstadters wrote the resolutions in the hopes of restoring rights that they believed were granted during October 1917, promises of worker control of factories and peasant control of the land. In an interview shortly after the Kronstadt rebellion, the chair of the PRC, Stepan Petrichenko said, "If there had been new elections to the soviets, on the basis of the [Soviet] Constitution... then, we thought, the Communists would not have gotten through, and the achievements of the October Revolution would have triumphed..."⁵

Primary among the concerns of the Kronstadters was the fate of the peasantry. Changes to policies on the treatment of the peasants figured prominently in the resolutions. They were mentioned in one-third of the 15 resolutions. These resolutions reflected the peasant origins of significant portion of Kronstadt's inhabitants. From demanding the right of assembly for peasant associations to calling for the removal of roadblocks that prevented the peasants from selling grain and the right of peasants to tend the land as they saw fit, the resolutions called upon the power of the Soviets to overturn many of the Bolsheviks' War Communism policies. This was a particular point of contention for the Kronstadt sailors, Bolshevik "requisitioning" policies decimated the villages where the families of many Kronstadt sailors and soldiers still resided. Urban workers also received considerable attention.⁶ The Kronstadters advocated legal assembly of trade unions, and equalization of food rations. But most interesting was the call for a conference of non-party workers to take place for the Petrograd and Kronstadt

region. Those workers without political affiliation were of immense concern to both the Bolsheviks and the Kronstadt rebels. Both argued these non-party workers played a critical role in the October Revolution. On 11 March, the Bolsheviks made their own appeal to the non-party workers in *Petrogradskaia pravda*. While urging calm, they simultaneously sought the support of the nonparty workers.⁷ The resolutions were also addressed to Red sailors and soldiers. The Kronstadters sought an end to partisan fighting units in the field and in the factories. Where guard duty was necessary, such as near food stores or important industrial sites, the workers within that locale were to provide necessary protection. The resolutions called upon the Red Army and the *kursanty* (partisan military cadets) to support the rebellion. Attempts to reach the soldiers and sailors were made continuously throughout the rebellion. Subsequent radio messages and articles in the *Izvestiia* continued to court support from military units, as they were so instrumental in maintaining Soviet power during the Civil War.

Finally, the resolutions called for a broad cultural approach to politics, encouraging the use of cultural/educational commissions to replace Bolshevik political bureaus to assure equal access to the means of propaganda for all “left” socialist parties. This resolution was a testament to the important role non-Bolshevik groups played in conveying the October Revolution to the masses. Through festivals, commemorations, and other mass spectacles, these groups provided the means by which the October Revolution could be conceived on a mass scale. The fact that the Kronstadters wanted such groups to be in charge of overseeing the dissemination of propaganda verifies the importance of these groups in the creation of October for the Russian population.

Like the Kronstadt Resolutions, the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* has been interpreted in a variety of ways since the Kronstadt rebellion.⁸ Most commentators and subsequent historians agreed that the Kronstadters' political philosophy, as it developed, was documented in the *Izvestiia*. But there has been considerable disagreement about what that philosophy was. In the first edition, the editors and authors of the *Izvestiia* set out to differentiate and define the Kronstadt rebellion in defiance of the Bolsheviks.⁹ First, they argued that the Bolsheviks had turned away from the masses, citing economic conditions and Bolshevik rural policies as proof of their inability to connect with population. The Kronstadt rebellion, which began on 1 March with the meeting on Anchor Square, expressed the will of all soldiers, sailors and laborers for liberation from Bolshevik political domination. The Kronstadt *Izvestiia* printed daily responses to leaflets the Bolsheviks dropped from airplanes as well as responses to Bolshevik radio broadcasts, placing themselves in the role of a critic, rebutting the Bolsheviks and defending the rebellion from Bolshevik representations. The paper was the voice of the Kronstadt rebellion, which sought to clarify the identity and political position of the Kronstadters as they were first expressed in the resolutions.

But the *Izvestiia* also had to appeal to a far wider audience. It was hoped that defiance of Bolshevik domination would spread outward from Kronstadt. Many articles were addressed to the workers, soldiers, and peasants of Russia. The Kronstadt *Izvestiia* was a medium through which the Kronstadters hoped to convey a political identity to rival the Bolsheviks. The Kronstadters were fighting for the "Third Revolution," namely a revolution that would deliver the promises of October by overthrowing the Bolshevik dictatorship and advocating local self-government and self-regulation.¹⁰ Throughout the

rebellion, citizens of Kronstadt wrote articles and resigned from the party, conveying the necessity of action in breaking from the Bolsheviks.

In the 11 March issue, the article "To Comrade Workers and Peasants" defended the revolutionary integrity of Kronstadt by appealing directly to the workers, peasants, and soldiers of Russia. The Bolsheviks were blamed for spreading lies and false rumors about the Kronstadt rebellion. In addition, the Bolsheviks (in particular Trotsky) were criticized for firing the first shot, thus putting the garrison of Kronstadt on the defensive. This notion of defense, more particularly the righteous cause of defending the Revolution from outside aggression, came up regularly in Bolshevik papers from the Civil War. It served as a justification for the executions, terror and requisitioning they carried out in the countryside during the Civil War. While the Kronstadt sailors did not resort to such measures, there were indications in the *Izvestiia* that the Kronstadters did not object to the application of terror against the Bolsheviks and any White Guard force that attempted to exploit the Kronstadt rebellion.¹¹

Using the metaphor of vigilant helmsmen, one author implored the citizens of Kronstadt to be on-guard against the enemies that surrounded them.¹² The reader was cautioned to guide the course of the rebellion carefully through the "submerged rocks," as tsarist forces also celebrated the Kronstadt rebellion, hoping that it signaled a new front against Soviet power. Addressing the reader directly, the article stated, "You are inspired with a burning desire to build true Soviet power, and by the noble hope of granting the worker freedom of labor, and the peasant the right to control his own land and the produce of his work. They are driven by the hope of raising anew the tsarist whip, and the privilege of generals."¹³ This subtle implication had precedent in Bolshevik papers

during the Civil War. The message was plain: the revolution depended on the reader to be conscious of the right path, and to be wary of deviation and of the motives of outside groups.

This concept of a correct path was, in fact, an attempt to seize upon a singular narrative for the revolution. In a 12 March commemoration of the February Revolution, Anatolii Lamanov stated that the workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors, threw out the bourgeoisie in October 1917, only to have the revolution stolen by the Bolsheviks shortly thereafter.¹⁴ But Lamanov held out hope for the third revolution. Kronstadt was on the front lines in February 1917, and October 1917, and they would lead Russia through the third revolution as well. In numerous articles of the *Izvestiia*, the garrison was referred to as "Revolutionary Kronstadt."¹⁵ The use of "revolutionary" in this context referred to the legacy of Red Kronstadt, the hotbed of rebellion during the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. Through these articles, the Kronstadters were displaying their revolutionary credentials, laying claim to the legacy of rebellion against the forces of the tsar and the capitalists.

The political ideas expressed in the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* demonstrate that the Bolsheviks successfully conveyed a revolutionary narrative and political mentality that started with the fall of autocracy (February 1917), continued through the rebellion of labor against bourgeois control (October 1917), and concluded with the necessity of struggle against counter-revolutionary forces, including reform-minded socialists (the Civil War). Buried in that narrative was the mindset of Russia's mythic present: a paranoid mentality that was fearful of deviation and dependent on idealistic absolutes concerning political challenges. Both the Bolsheviks and the Kronstadters were compelled to celebrate the February Revolution in their papers. This commemoration

was an attempt by both sides to tie their cause to the legitimacy of the overthrow of tsardom.

But the similarities did not end on such a superficial level. Revolutionary phrases and mentalities present in the *Izvestiia* can be traced to the revolutionary lexicon that the Bolsheviks fostered in Soviet Russia between 1917 and 1921. Bolshevik discourse dominated the political landscape in Russia during the period, as we saw above. The authors of *Pravda o Kronshtadte* noted the effects of constant Bolshevik propaganda during the period. Reflecting on the barrage of Bolshevik discourse against the Kronstadters, they noted that "...this grandiosely erected fabrication, this deceit, could not fail to have a negative influence, could not fail but to undermine trust in Kronstadt."¹⁶

The 8 March issue of the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* featured the banner "Trotsky's First Shot: The Signal of Communist Despair." The article under this banner proceeded to contextualize the beginning of the Bolshevik assault on Kronstadt in political terms.¹⁷ The Bolsheviks attacked hastily to put an end to the rising tide of revolutionary support for Kronstadt. When viewed in conjunction with the article entitled "We and They," the banner became more of a guide to the reader. "We" was defined in terms of the necessity to oppose the Bolsheviks and the crimes they were committing. The author asserted that, "the World knows what Kronstadt is fighting for," but the Kronstadters' cause was not spelled out at this point. The Communists continued to be blamed for not allowing non-party laborers to come to Kronstadt, fearing that they would learn the "truth." The Communists were accused of bathing their hands in the blood of the peasants and workers that died defending Russia from the forces of the White Guard. After years of fighting and Civil War propaganda, the Kronstadt rebels were conditioned to think in

terms of “We” and “They”. This is the essence of the Russian mythic present, idealistic judgments compelled the Bolshevik leadership (and, subsequently, the Kronstadters) to polarize opposition in terms of absolute alternatives. By polarizing and discursively isolating the population versus the “enemy,” both the Kronstadters and the Bolsheviks hoped to rally support for their respective visions of the Revolution. After years of conditioning to think in terms of revolutionary absolutes, there was simply no middle ground left to even consider. All was measured by total success (the Revolution) or total failure (counter-revolution).¹⁸

Only after establishing the identity of the Bolsheviks did the editors of the 8 March issue of the *Izvestiia* mention the Kronstadters’ cause. Reading from top to bottom, and left to right, the article “What We Are Fighting for” was last on the front page, its headline in the smallest print.¹⁹ The author interpreted the Kronstadt rebellion as a movement aimed at realizing the hopes that were enshrined in October, before the Bolsheviks usurped power. Thus, the article asserted, the “great emblems of the workers’ state, the hammer and sickle, have been replaced by the Communist authorities with prison bars and bayonets.” The Kronstadters fought for a third revolution, which would “break the last chains of the working masses.” The author appeared conscious of the affects of Bolshevik propaganda, as he hinted at the more insidious effects of Bolshevik control, railing against Communist interference with the “inner world” of the workers, where the Communists were forcing workers to think as they did!

On the next page, the banner read, “Soviet Power Will Free the Laboring Peasantry from the Yoke of the Communists.” One of the headlines under this banner reads, “Remember, We Are the Shocktroops of the Revolution.” The use of banners and

headlines in context to the articles bear a striking resemblance to Bolshevik newspapers. The reader was guided through the events being described in the articles in accordance with a very particular outlook. The violence being committed against the Kronstadters is first transferred into the realm of political discourse, then the reader was encouraged to think of the enemy as “They”, who have committed terrible atrocities against all of Russia. “We” is then defined as those that would take up arms against “They”, shock troops who are now clearly charged to remove the Communist yolk from around the people’s necks. This message ran in parallel with the articles, reaffirming preconceived notions of who the Bolsheviks were, and thus who the Kronstadters were.

The 9 March edition of the *Izvestiia* continued the attack. Its banner read, “Lenin Said: ‘Communism is Soviet Power Plus Electrification’, but the People Are Convinced that Bolshevik Communism is Commissarocracy Plus Executions.” Most articles in the issue defined the Communists as a group apart from the people. Communist atrocities were laid out for the reader. Articles under this banner told of bombs being dropped from airplanes, indiscriminately killing children as well as interrogations and executions of those that showed sympathy with the Kronstadt rebels at the hands of the *Cheka* at Oranienbaum.²⁰ Additional abuses were indicated in articles entitled “Mis-Use of the White Flag,” and “How the Communists Lie.” But a little further on, the banner “All Power to the Soviets, not to Parties” was repeated. From that point on, the articles switch emphasis to discuss affairs in and around Kronstadt, modeling the proper functioning of a local Soviet. The issue ends with resolutions of support from the city and surrounding forts, inspirational poetry about Kronstadt’s revolutionary character, and news about elections to the *Revstroika* (Revolutionary Tribunal).

On 12 March, the Kronstadters commemorated the four-year anniversary of the February Revolution. The banner in the *Izvestiia* read: "Today is the Anniversary of the Overthrow of Autocracy, and the Eve of the Fall of Commissarocracy." As the daily assaults against the forts and city were growing in intensity, it was increasingly important to at least maintain the political counter-offensive against Bolshevik propaganda. In the article, "Stages of Revolution," the concept of the Third Revolution was further clarified. The Kronstadters stood for the liberation brought by the February Revolution, for the liberation from capital in October 1917, and for liberation from Bolshevik tyranny. But it would stand against a Constituent Assembly, having placed its faith squarely with Soviet power. This point is accentuated by the banner headline on the next page: "The Soviets, and Not the Constituent Assembly, Are the Workers' Bastion." The Bolshevik propaganda campaign against the Kronstadters heavily emphasized the SR influence in and around Kronstadt. The leaders of the Kronstadt rebellion were going to great lengths to distance themselves, and their constituents, from any party, including the SRs.

In much the same way that the Bolsheviks did, the editors began to use banners in combination with articles to persuade and guide readers. In short, bold-faced statements, they (in their own words) separated "We" from "They". The banners were also used to convey a simplified version of the political beliefs expressed by the leaders of the Kronstadt rebellion. Suggestive banners applied emphasis to certain points, provided a sense of unity for the articles presented in the paper, and gave coherence to the Kronstadters and their cause. At the moment of crisis, when Kronstadt was under literal and discursive assault, reliance on political discourse to foster a sense of group identity was increasingly important. It was a lesson that the Kronstadters learned from three

years of Civil War. The author of "To Comrade Workers and Peasants" stated that the Kronstadt rebellion was the only path out of the "dead end" imposed by the Bolsheviks.²¹ Thus, the reader was again confronted by the notion of a proper or correct path that had to be followed carefully if the revolution was to stay "on course." And like Bolshevik Civil War discourse, the Kronstadters appealed to the peasants by raising the issue of black repartition. The article asked, "Comrade peasants, the Bolsheviks deceived and fleeced you most of all. Where is the land that you took from the landowners, and of which you dreamed for hundreds of years? It has been given away to communards or put under Soviet collectives."²²

Of all of the articles in the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*, none have been more scrutinized than "Stages of Revolution" in the 11 March issue. This article laid out a revolutionary narrative that began with the February Revolution, and culminated in the Kronstadt rebellion. Much of it agreed with Bolshevik revolutionary narratives up to 1921. February 1917 was a revolution carried out by the working masses, but co-opted by the bourgeoisie. But patience with bourgeois promises and plans for a Constituent Assembly gave out in October, as the workers, peasants and soldiers gave allegiance to the soviets. In that act, the workers, peasants, and soldiers were united in common interest. Only after this did the Kronstadt narrative part with that of the Bolsheviks. Whereas the Bolsheviks (at this point) maintained that they were thrust into power to defend the revolution shortly before the Civil War, the Kronstadters contended that the Bolsheviks, who used party lists, corruption, and coercion to gain power, usurped the soviets. But, as Anatolli Lamonov (the article's author) contended, Kronstadt was ever vigilant to the

needs of the revolution, and was ready to rear its head against the new tyrants in the name of Soviet Power.

Thus, both the Bolsheviks and the Kronstadters called for the peasants' right to the land, the workers' right to control the factories, and support from the lower ranks of the armed forces.²³ The Kronstadt Resolutions reified the concept of a union between peasants, workers, and soldiers, emphasized time and again by the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. This point was further highlighted in the Kronstadt *Izvestiia*. Most historians simply dismiss the Bolshevik platform prior to October 1917 and during the Civil War as deceitful propaganda aimed at quickly garnering popular support to maintain power. In fact, this message was actually appropriated by many peasants, workers, and soldiers. The Kronstadt Resolutions were a manifestation of this feeling of unity. The drafters of the resolutions, and everyone who supported the Resolutions at the public reading on Anchor Square, became proponents of a "true" October Revolution, inspired by Bolshevik political discourse but hostile to Bolsheviks.

The actual identity or class composition of the Kronstadters, of much interest to many historians, may be less important or interesting than the identity they appropriated before and during the Rebellion. They came from the village and the factory, from the Ukraine, European Russia, and the Baltic States. And yet they were united in their understanding of the events that were unfolding, articulating their beliefs in the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* using a common lexicon. Soldiers and sailors that either participated in, or sympathized with, the October Revolution wrote the Kronstadt Resolutions and the *Izvestiia*. They remembered October as a popular revolution, and thereby defined it in lines with their "Anchor Square democracy."²⁴ The resolutions were couched in the

language of class struggle and revolutionary participation, implying a populist vision of *smychka*, a common set of interests for peasants, workers, soldiers, and sailors.

Notes

¹ Donald Raleigh explores the development of different “registers” of language during the Russian Civil War in his article *Languages of Power*. Raleigh argues that the revolutionary period featured a “heroic” present (much the same as Lynn Hunt’s mythic present) – where language was constantly negotiated and reshaped to meet the demands of those in power for understanding the events that were transpiring. See Donald Raleigh, “Languages of Power: How the Saratov Bolsheviks Imagined Their Enemies,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 321.

² In “Socialism in Quotes” from the 16 March issue of the *Izvestiia*, the author indicates that the Bolsheviks stirred the passions of the population through use of “deceitful slogans,” dragging the population behind them with promises of a better society. But these promises were not delivered, and “the slogan ‘He who does not work, does not eat’...[became] ‘all for the commissars’.” *Pravda o Kronshtade*, 173-174.

³ The word propaganda is freighted with meaning. In today’s parlance, it has come to mean falsehood or half-truth disseminated to further political ideology. For the purposes of this essay, “propaganda” should be taken to mean the propagation of political beliefs, as it existed in the *fin-de-siecle* context.

⁴ The text for this analysis was derived from several sources. *Pravda o Kronshtade*, a book written shortly after the rebellion was crushed, reprinted the text of the Resolutions. This text was verified against the diary of Alexander Berkman, who copied the text from a copy of the Resolutions during the rebellion. My first exposure to this source was an English translation by Scott Zenkatsu Parker, who published his translation at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mhuey/HOME.html>. His translation was an invaluable aid to me in my analysis of the original, published in Russian.

⁵ *Pravda o Kronshtade*, 8.

⁶ The resolutions also demanded freedom for individuals to produce items using ones own labor. This provision for artisan manufacturing was the final resolution in the document, and might have been geared to the small-scale manufacturers that still lived in the city of Kronstadt.

⁷ *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, 11 March, 1921.

⁸ The publishers of *Pravda o Kronshtade* reprinted all of the issues to, in their words, “let the readers learn and know the whole truth about Kronstadt” - believing that the papers were a transparent representation of the events. *Volia Rossii*, a Prague-based group of SR political exiles, was the first group to comment on the Kronstadters outside of Russia. They featured among their members the former leader of the Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky. In subsequent issues of their periodical *Volia Rossii*, the group attempted to reconcile the Kronstadt program with the SR political philosophy. They argued that after years of Bolshevik rule, the Kronstadt rebels were confused, but in

time, they would have demanded convocation of a Constituent Assembly to address Russia political and economic conditions. But articles and interviews by leaders of the Kronstadt rebellion after the fact reveal that they were hostile to the idea of a Constituent Assembly, as it could be subverted by the same methods that the Bolsheviks used to subvert the Soviets - party lists. See *Pravda o Kronshtadte*, 3.

⁹ "To the Population of the Fortress and City of Kronstadt. Comrades and Citizens," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 3 March, 1921. The issues of the *Kronstadt Izvestiia* that are analyzed in this paper are taken from *Pravda o Kronshtadte*, 65.

¹⁰ The Kronstadters' political orientation echoed many of the sentiments of Russian anarchists during the period. The Bolsheviks pointed to "petty-bourgeois anarchist" influences as proof that political factions were maliciously leading the ignorant inhabitants of Kronstadt astray. Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, and historians like Paul Avrich also noted Kronstadt's libertarian bent. They saw the Kronstadt rebellion as the last outpouring of anarchist principles in Russia before being crushed by the Bolsheviks. But we should not be so quick to place the rebellion in the anarchist camp. While Avrich has well documented the connections between Kronstadt and Russian Anarchism, the *Kronstadt Izvestiia* shows that the Kronstadters had many different political backgrounds including anarchism, SR-Maximalism, and Menshevism. But, as a whole, they seemed genuinely mistrustful of any pre-existing political faction, orientation, or party.

¹¹ "What We Are Fighting For," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 8 March, 1921.

¹² "Sirs or Comrades," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 6 March, 1921

¹³ "Sirs or Comrades," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 6 March, 1921. Thanks to Scott Zenkatsu Parker, whose translation is quoted here.

¹⁴ Anatolii Lamanov, "Stages of Revolution," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 12 March, 1921.

¹⁵ "The opinions of the workers are on the side of revolutionary Kronstadt, and they are trying to unite with us." *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 5 March, 1921.

¹⁶ *Pravda o Kronshtadte*, 26-27.

¹⁷ "The First Shot," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 8 March, 1921.

¹⁸ Shortly after the rebellion, the editors of *Pravda o Kronshtadte* recognized this when they indicated that for the Kronstadters, all was "dedicated to the burning theme 'We and They' - i.e. 'We' - the Kronstadters and 'They' - the Bolsheviks." *Pravda o Kronshtadte*, 22.

¹⁹ "What We are Fighting for," *Kronstadt Izvestiia*, 8 March, 1921.

²⁰ "They Are Shooting Our Children," Kronstadt Izvestiia, 9 March, 1921.

²¹ "To Comrade Workers and Peasants," Kronstadt Izvestiia, 11 March, 1921.

²² Kronstadt Izvestiia, 8 March, 1921.

²³ Vladimir Brovkin, "Workers' Unrest and the Bolsheviks' Response in 1919," Slavic Review 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 350.

²⁴ Brovkin, 350.

CHAPTER 7 THE KRONSTADT REBELLION AND THE BOUNDARIES OF BOLSHEVIK DISCOURSE

It was with no small irony that the 50th anniversary of the Paris Commune fell on 18 March, 1921. On that day, Alexander Berkman noted in his diary, “Kr[onstadt] has fallen.... Isn’t it terrible – 50th anniversary. [The] papers draw a line between the victory of reaction then, and now the victory of comm[unism] over the counter-rev[olutionary] uprising.”¹ Emma Goldman, Berkman’s fellow exile in Russia, recalled the horror of hearing the *Internationale* being sung by victorious soldiers returning from the brutal suppression of the uprising.

The Kronstadt rebellion failed. It failed to incite rebellion at even the provincial level. The Kronstadters’ identity, ideology, and interpretations of October were erased quickly after the rebellion was suppressed.² When the Kronstadt sailors and soldiers decided to break with the Bolshevik-dominated regime, they did so with the hope of correcting the Soviet system of government from within. This is why historians have examined the rebellion so closely. It is also why the rebellion was suppressed so brutally by the Bolsheviks.

The Kronstadters put forward an alternative vision of October, representing themselves as the defenders of the revolution. The potential threat the Kronstadters put forward was, in some respects, far greater than that of the White forces during the Civil War. The Kronstadters hoped to displace the Bolsheviks from *within* the Soviet system.

Bolshevik leaders feared that if the Russian population saw the Kronstadters as class-conscious proletarians defending the rights granted by the October Revolution, then Bolshevik domination of the soviets might collapse. Lenin recognized the threat of Kronstadt when he noted that the Kronstadters' demands were "extremely dangerous, no matter how insignificant their corrections to our policy seem at first glance," noting that the mood of hostility the Kronstadters were producing "has had a wide influence on the proletariat."³

Historians have analyzed the Kronstadt Resolutions and the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* as transparent representations of the Kronstadters' political ideology. While focusing on what was said, they missed how it was said. Historians who claim that October 1917 was a coup, maintained by force and coercion alone, rarely seek vindication for their arguments in the social, cultural, or lexical milieu of the period. They ignore popular participation and responses to the actions taken by those "on top." But October unleashed a flood of truly revolutionary changes in the population. People began to think on a national scale, the concept of ownership was radically changed, literacy rates continued to climb despite economic and social hardship, "comrade" became a common salutation, and women gained access to the public sphere. With these changes, the lexical and conceptual landscape of Russia radically shifted. The language of revolution was spread far and wide by the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. The "old" was being swept away, even while the new was still being negotiated. Idealistic absolutes were imposed upon social realities. Deviation became anathema. The Kronstadt Resolutions and the Kronstadt *Izvestiia* featured much of this discursive baggage; they were a mirror of the Bolshevik political discourse of 1917-1921.

All revolutions and wars encourage a mentality of absolutes. But when the Kronstadters' political writings are compared to Bolshevik discourse, it is hard to ignore the similarities of style and content. The fact that the Kronstadters' were unable to reconcile with any political opposition group inside or outside of Russia demonstrates the degree to which the Bolsheviks had discursively isolated supporters of the October Revolution. Once the population was convinced that October *was* a revolution, the event was cemented to the revolutionary narrative that began in February 1917.⁴ The Bolsheviks fostered a lexicon that was so pervasive, that it successfully discredited opposing narratives, and forced opposition to either flee the country or think in terms of the October Revolution. Thus, Kronstadt was not the last hope of Social Democracy in Russia, nor were the Kronstadters the true disciples of October. In the end, their appropriated identity bore remarkable resemblance to that of the Bolsheviks. And, within the confines of Bolshevik political discourse, it is unlikely that they would have produced anything different.

Notes

¹ Alexander Berkman, "Russia Diary," 18 March, 1921. I would like to thank the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam for their help in photocopying and sending these documents to me after my trip there in June of 2001.

² After the Bolsheviks suppressed the Kronstadt rebellion, they set out to erase all symbols that could be linked to the rebellion. Rather than sinking the ships or burning the buildings, the Bolsheviks began an extensive campaign of renaming structures and institutions around Kronstadt. First, the *Izvestiia* became *Krasnyi Kronshtadt*. The *Petropavlovsk* was renamed the *Marat*, after the French revolutionary. The *Sevastopol* became the *Paris Commune*. Finally, Anchor Square was replaced with Revolution Square. The choice of names implies intent to bury the Kronstadt rebellion in the past, while simultaneously joining the Russian Revolution to the legacy of the French Revolution and the Paris Commune. As such, all potential symbols of rebellion against the Communists were discursively obscured. And, in the contexts of the mythic present, discursive obscurity was a death sentence to the Kronstadters' political identity inside Russia.

³ Collected Works of Lenin, vol. 32, 184.

⁴ It is interesting to note that this narrative began to track backwards to consume the 1905 revolution, and as the years went on, stretched back into Russia's early modern period, where "revolutionaries" such as Razin and Pugachev became enshrined in Russia's revolutionary tradition.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tobin J. Shorey received his B.A. with Highest Honors in History at the University of Florida in 1997. Dr. Maria Todorova (now at the University of Illinois, U.C.) supervised his undergraduate honors thesis. He won an award from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1997 for the best presentation of his thesis, which focused on Mikhail Bakunin and the First International Workingman's Association.

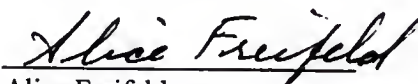
Currently, he is working on an examination of the Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921, of which this thesis is one part. After completing his M.A. in history (August 2003), he hopes to continue historical research on Russia, including pre- and post-revolutionary studies, while gaining classroom experience in order to prepare for a future career in higher education.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.



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